SPECIAL FEATURE NO. 3-2163 AUGUST 23, 1978
ROBERT CHANCELLOR/NAIROBI

KENYATTA: AN APPRECIATION

ANNCR: THE PRESIDENT OF KENYA, JOMO KENYATTA, DIED TUESDAY AT HIS OCEANSIDE HOME IN MOMBASSA AND NOW IS LYING IN STATE IN NAIROBI FOR TEN DAYS BEFORE HIS FUNERAL. THE HISTORICAL FACTS OF THE AFRICAN LEADER'S LIFE AND RULE ARE WELL KNOWN AND ARE BEING WIDELY DISCUSSED. BUT VOA CORRESPONDENT BOB CHANCELLOR, WHO HAS LIVED IN KENYA THE PAST THREE YEARS OFFERS SOME VIEWS AND VIGNETTES ABOUT JOMO KENYATTA, THE MAN AND THE LEADER, THAT MAY NOT APPEAR IN OFFICIAL BIOGRAPHIES.

VOICE: PRIOR TO KENYA'S INDEPENDENCE IN NINETEEN SIXTY-THREE, A BRITISH OFFICIAL DESCRIBED JOMO KENYATTA AS "A LEADER INTO DARKNESS AND DEATH." HE WAS ACCUSED OF, CONVICTED OF, AND JAILED FOR LEADING THE MAU-MAU INSURGENCY AGAINST BRITISH COLONIAL RULE, AN ACCUSATION HE ALWAYS DENIED.

AFTER INDEPENDENCE, MANY IN THE WEST CONSIDERED JOMO KENYATTA TO BE A DANGEROUS RADICAL AND PROBABLY A COMMUNIST BECAUSE HE HAD VISITED THE SOVIET UNION. BUT NOW, FIFTEEN YEARS LATER, IT IS OBVIOUS THAT THIS MAN WAS INSTEAD ONE OF THE MOST MODERATE LEADERS OF MODERN, EMERGING AFRICA. HE LED HIS NATION INTO STABILITY AND TREMENDOUS ECONOMIC GROWTH. HIS GOVERNMENT INSPIRED THE CONFIDENCE OF INVESTORS AND THE TRUST OF THE WORLD.

MANY SAID JOMO KENYATTA RULED LIKE AN OLDTIME TRIBAL CHIEF, AND INDEED HE DID DEMAND AND ENJOY THE PERQUISITES OF HIS OFFICE. BUT HE WAS NOT AUTOCRATIC. HE LISTENED TO HIS ADVISORS AND HIS CABINET MINISTERS, AND GAVE THEM WIDE LATITUDE IN THE OPERATION OF THEIR DEPARTMENTS. HOWEVER,

VOICE: HE STILL MAINTAINED A TIGHT GRIP ON THE GOVERNMENT. ALTHOUGH HE WAS OLD, APPROACHING EIGHTY-NINE, AND SPENDING MANY AFTERNOONS RESTING, HE WAS ACTIVE AND ENERGETIC IN HIS MORNING CABINET MEETINGS. ONE CABINET MINISTER TOLD ME, "HE ALWAYS SEEMED TO KNOW WHAT WAS GOING ON, AND IF I OR MY DEPARTMENT HAD DONE SOMETHING HE THOUGHT WAS WRONG, HE WOULD FIX HIS PIERCING EYES ON ME AND DEMAND AN EXPLANATION."

PRESIDENT KENYATTA KNEW THE FEELINGS OF HIS PEOPLE, PARTLY BECAUSE HE MADE EVERY EFFORT TO BE AMONG THEM. SEVERAL TIMES EACH WEEK HE WOULD BE TAKEN ON DRIVES TO THE COUNTRYSIDE WHERE HE WOULD TALK TO VILLAGERS. NEARLY EVERY DAY TRADITIONAL DANCERS FROM VARIOUS VILLAGES WOULD COME TO STATE HOUSE TO ENTERTAIN THE PRESIDENT, AND INVARIABLY THE ENTERTAINMENT WOULD END WITH THE PRESIDENT ON THE DANCE FLOOR AMONG THE DANCERS, DANCING HIMSELF AND GREETING THE OTHERS. IT WAS SUSPECTED THAT IT WAS ON THESE OCCASIONS THAT PRESIDENT KENYATTA LEARNED WHAT THE PEOPLE WERE THINKING.

THERE IS SOME IRONY THAT PRESIDENT KENYATTA'S BODY WAS TAKEN TO THE STAE HOUSE IN NAIROBI FOR TEN DAYS OF PUBLIC VIEWING BEFORE THE FUNERAL. FOR PRESIDENT KENYATTA DID NOT LIKE THE NAIROBI STATE HOUSE, THE OLD COLONIAL HEADQUARTERS HE SAID IT WAS FILLED WITH BRITISH DEVILS, AND REFUSED TO SLEEP THERE. INSTEAD, HE DIVIDED HIS TIME BETWEEN HIS BELOVED FARM HOME IN GATUNDA NORTH OF NAIROBI AND THE STATE HOUSE IN NAKURU IN KENYA'S RIFT VALLEY, AND AT THE STATE HOUSE OF MOMBASSA.

IN ADDITION TO HIS ALMOST DAILY MEETINGS WITH DANCERS AND VISITS TO THE COUNTRYSIDE, THREE TIMES EACH YEAR PRESIDENT

VOICE: CONT'D) KENYATTA WOULD VISIT NAIROBI TO DELIVER TELEVISED PUBLIC SPEECHES ON IMPORTANT NATIONAL HOLIDAYS. HIS SPEECH USUALLY WAS THE SAME -- AN EXHORTATION TO THE PEOPLE TO WORK HARD FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEIR COUNTRY, URGING PARENTS TO EDUCATE THEIR CHILDREN, AND TELLING THE PEOPLE TO CONCENTRATE THEIR EFFORTS ON THE LAND, WHICH HE CONSIDERED TO BE KENYA'S REAL WEALTH. HE HAD BEEN AN EARLY ADVOCATE OF ADAPTING MODERN FARMING METHODS TO KENYA. THESE HOLIDAY SPEECHES ALWAYS WERE DELIVERED IN ENGLISH -- IN LATER YEARS, THE PRESIDENT'S VOICE, HALTING BUT STILL STRONG. AND THEN HE WOULD ALWAYS MAKE A FEW COMMENTS IN SWAHILI, OR EVEN THE TRIBAL LANGUAGE OF KIKUYU, AND THESE COMMENTS ALWAYS ATTRACTED JOY AND LAUGHTER FROM HIS AUDIENCE, WHILE THE FOREIGNERS PRESENT NEVER FULLY UNDERSTOOD WHAT THE PRESIDENT WAS SAYING TO HIS PEOPLE IN THE PRIVACY OF THEIR OWN TONGUE.

BECAUSE HE DID NOT LIKE FLYING, PRESIDENT KENYATTA DID NOT OFTEN LEAVE KENYA. ONE OF HIS LAST TRIPS WAS TO ETHIOPIA IN NINETEEN SIXTY-SEVEN TO VISIT HIS LONG TIME FRIEND AND COLLEAGUE, EMPEROR HAILE SELLASSIE. AND HE MADE ONE TRIP AFTER THAT, TO DAR ES SALAAM, TO VIST HIS PARTNER IN THE NOW-DEFUNCT EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY, PRESIDENT JULIUS NYERERE OF TANZANIA. THE FAILURE OF THE COMMUNITY, WHICH PRESIDENT KENYATTA WORKED TO ORGANIZE FROM THE TIME OF INDEPENDENCE, MUST HAVE BEEN ONE OF HIS MAJOR DISAPPOINTMENTS.

IN LATER DAYS, PRESIDENT KENYATTA DID NOT HAVE TO FLY OFF TO OTHER CAPITALS. THE WORLD BEAT A PATH TO HIS DOOR. THE BLACK LEADERS OF RHODESIA OR ZIMBABWE WERE FREQUENT CALLERS AT STATE HOUSE. AND, IN NINETEEN SEVENTY-FIVE, PRESIDENT

VOICE: (CONT'D) KENYATTA CALLED THE ANGOLAN FACTION LEADERS TO KENYA, TO TRY TO FORESTALL THE THREATENED ANGOLAN CIVIL WAR. WHEN U.S. SECRETARY OF STATE HENRY KISSENGER CAME TO AFRICA IN NINETEEN SEVENTY-SIX, PRESIDENT KENYATTA WAS THE FIRST LEADER HE STOPPED TO SEE AS HE SOUGHT A SOLUTION TO SOUTHERN AFRICA'S PROBLEMS. MISTER KISSENGER TWICE TRAVELED TO THE NAKURU STATE HOUSE, AND LIKE MOST OTHER VISITORS WAS LED ONTO THE DANCE FLOOR AMONG THE DANCERS.

THE KISSINGER VISITS PROVIDED THE OCCASION FOR THE LAST KENYATTA NEWS CONFERENCE. ALTHOUGH A WRITER AND JOURNALIST HIMSELF, PRESIDENT KENYATTA DID NOT SUFFER JOURNALISTS WELL. HE APPEARED TO THINK THAT MOST QUESTIONS ASKED HIM BY REPORTERS WERE FOOLISH, AND HE USUALLY WOULD RESPOND WITH A GRUFF, "WHY DO YOU WANT TO KNOW?" OR IF THE QUESTION WAS ON INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, A DISARMING, "THAT'S NOT FOR ME TO SAY?"

THAT WAS PRESIDENT JOMO KENYATTA, A MAN REVERED BY HIS COUNTRYMEN AND REFERRED TO AS MZEE, SWAHILI FOR "WISE OLD MAN." HE IS A MAN WHO WILL BE MISSED IN KENYA.

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